

Department of Veterans Affairs

§ 1.575

(iii) If a requester is required to make advance payments, as described in this section, the time limits prescribed in § 1.553a of this part, for responding to initial requests and appeals from initial denials, will begin only after the Department has received the advance fee payments.

(5) *Debt collection.* In the event of non-payment of billed charges for disclosure of records, the procedures authorized by the Debt Collection Act of 1982 (Pub. L. 97-365) may be used. This may include disclosure to consumer reporting agencies and use of collection agencies.

(Authority: 5 U.S.C. 552(a)(4)(A))

[53 FR 10377, Mar. 31, 1988]

§ 1.556 Requests for other reasonably described records.

Each administration, staff office, and field facility head will designate an employee(s) who will be responsible for initial action on (granting or denying) requests to inspect or obtain information from or copies of records under their jurisdiction and within the purview of § 1.553. This responsibility includes maintaining a uniform listing of such requests. Data logged will consist of: Name and address of requester; date of receipt of request; brief description of request; action taken on request, granted or denied; citation of the specific section when request is denied; and date of reply to the requester. In the field a denial of any such request may be made only by the Director or the designated employee and in Central Office only by the administration or staff office head or designee. The letter notifying the requester of the denial will be signed by the official making the denial decision. Any legal question arising in a field station concerning the release of information will be referred to the appropriate Regional Counsel for disposition as contemplated by § 13.401* of this chapter. In Central Office such legal questions will be referred to the General Counsel. Any administrative question will be referred through administrative channels to the appropriate administration or

staff office head. All denials or proposed denials at the Central Office level will be coordinated with the Director, Information Service as well as the General Counsel.

[40 FR 12658, Mar. 20, 1975]

§ 1.557 Administrative review.

(a) Upon denial of a request, the responsible Department of Veterans Affairs official or designated employee will inform the requester in writing of the denial, cite the specific exemption in § 1.554 upon which the denial is based, set forth the names and titles or positions of each person responsible for the denial of such request, and advise that the denial may be appealed to the General Counsel.

(b) The final agency decision in such appeals will be made by the General Counsel or the Deputy General Counsel.

[40 FR 12658, Mar. 20, 1975, as amended at 55 FR 21546, May 25, 1990]

§§ 1.558–1.559 [Reserved]

SAFEGUARDING PERSONAL INFORMATION IN DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS RECORDS

NOTE: Sections 1.575 through 1.584 concern the safeguarding of individual privacy from the misuse of information from files, records, reports, and other papers and documents in Department of Veterans Affairs custody. As to the release of information from Department of Veterans Affairs claimant records see § 1.500 series. As to the release of information from Department of Veterans Affairs records other than claimant records see § 1.550 series. Section 1.575 series implement the provisions of Pub. L. 93-579, December 31, 1974, adding a section 552a to title 5 U.S.C. providing that individuals be granted access to records concerning them which are maintained by Federal agencies, and for other purposes.

SOURCE: 40 FR 33944, Aug. 12, 1975, unless otherwise noted.

§ 1.575 Social security numbers in veterans' benefits matters.

(a) Except as provided in paragraph (b) of this section, no one will be denied any right, benefit, or privilege provided by law because of refusal to disclose to the Department of Veterans Affairs a social security number.

*EDITORIAL NOTE: At 42 FR 41410, Aug. 17, 1977, § 13.401 was removed.

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(b) VA shall require mandatory disclosure of a claimant's or beneficiary's social security number (including the social security number of a dependent of a claimant or beneficiary) on necessary forms as prescribed by the Secretary as a condition precedent to receipt or continuation of receipt of compensation or pension payable under the provisions of chapters 11, 13 and 15 of title 38, United States Code, provided, however, that a claimant shall not be required to furnish VA with a social security number for any person to whom a social security number has not been assigned. VA may also require mandatory disclosure of an applicant's social security number as a condition for receiving loan guaranty benefits and a social security number or other taxpayer identification number from existing direct and vendee loan borrowers and as a condition precedent to receipt of a VA-guaranteed loan, direct loan or vendee loan, under chapter 37 of title 38, United States Code. (Pub. L. 97-365, sec. 4)

(c) A person requested by VA to disclose a social security number shall be told, as prescribed by § 1.578(c), whether disclosure is voluntary or mandatory. The person shall also be told that VA is requesting the social security number under the authority of title 38 U.S.C., or in the case of existing direct or vendee loan borrowers, under the authority of 26 U.S.C. 6109(a) in conjunction with sections 145 and 148 of Pub. L. 98-369, or in the case of loan applicants, under the authority of section 4 of Pub. L. 97-365. The person shall also be told that it will be used in the administration of veterans' benefits in the identification of veterans or persons claiming or receiving VA benefits and their records, that it may be used in making reports to the Internal Revenue Service where required by law, and to determine whether a loan guaranty applicant has been identified as a delinquent taxpayer by the Internal Revenue Service, and that such taxpayers may have their loan applications rejected, and that it may be used to verify social security benefit entitlement (including amounts payable) with the Social Security Administration and, for other purposes where authorized by both title 38 U.S.C., and the Privacy Act of

1974, (Pub. L. 93-579), or, where required by another statute. (Pub. L. 97-365, sec. 4)

(Authority: 38 U.S.C. 5101)

[44 FR 22068, Apr. 13, 1979, as amended at 51 FR 21750, June 16, 1986; 56 FR 25044, June 3, 1991]

§ 1.576 General policies, conditions of disclosure, accounting of certain disclosures, and definitions.

(a) The Department of Veterans Affairs will safeguard an individual against an invasion of personal privacy. Except as otherwise provided by law or regulation its officials and employees will:

(1) Permit an individual to determine what records pertaining to him or her will be collected, maintained, used, or disseminated by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

(2) Permit an individual to prevent records pertaining to him or her, obtained by the Department of Veterans Affairs for a particular purpose, from being used or made available for another purpose without his or her consent.

(3) Permit an individual to gain access to information pertaining to him or her in Department of Veterans Affairs records, to have a copy made of all or any portion thereof, and to correct or amend such records.

(4) Collect, maintain, use, or disseminate any record of identifiable personal information in a manner that assures that such action is for a necessary and lawful purpose, that the information is correct and accurate for its intended use, and that adequate safeguards are provided to prevent misuse of such information.

(5) Permit exemptions from records requirements provided in 5 U.S.C. 552a only where an important public policy need for such exemption has been determined pursuant to specific statutory authority.

(b) The Department of Veterans Affairs will not disclose any record contained in a system of records by any means of communication to any person or any other agency except by written request of or prior written consent of the individual to whom the record pertains unless such disclosure is: